

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Epidemic Meningitis Bears Watching.—Nineteen cases of epidemic meningitis were reported in California last week; in fact, the present trend of meningitis is similar to the trend of the disease during November and December of 1928. The past year has brought more cases and more deaths from epidemic meningitis than any year in the history of California. From January to August, inclusive, 1929, 302 deaths from epidemic meningitis have been recorded in this state. Thirty-two per cent of these deaths, 118, were among Filipinos, Mexicans, Chinese, and Japanese. Of these, 57 were in Filipinos, 39 in Mexicans, 16 in Chinese, and 6 in Japanese. Two hundred eighteen deaths were in men and eighty-four in women. The numbers of deaths by months of occurrence were as follows:

January	43
February	36
March	55
April	47
May	51
June	35
July	19
August	16

It will be noted that the status of meningitis at the present time is similar to the status of the disease at the same time last year. Health officers are urged to be on the watch for cases that may be suspicious of this disease and to report promptly to the State Department of Public Health any such cases that may occur.

Winter Season Brings Influenza and Measles.—From the reports of cases of influenza and pneumonia received during the past four weeks, it is evident that respiratory infections are more prevalent. The increased incidence indicates that we may expect an outbreak of influenza during February and March. In the past, epidemics of influenza and pneumonia occurring during February and March have been less extensive than those in the fall months. Nevertheless, the disease, with all of its debilitating effects and serious sequelae, is always to be regarded with apprehension and persons are urged to heed the advice of avoiding crowds, going to bed upon appearance of first symptoms and taking sufficient rest to allow complete recovery before resuming activities. A physician should be in attendance.

Measles, also, is on the increase. During 1927, 58,963 cases were reported, and since the epidemics appear with definite regularity, this increased incidence of the last few weeks leads us to believe that measles will be one of the leading diseases of children during January, February, and March. Scarlet fever and mumps continue to prevail, though the cases of scarlet fever are reported to be very mild in most instances.

The present distribution of epidemic meningitis is somewhat disturbing.

The trichinosis season is upon us.

Smallpox is decidedly in evidence.

Scarlet Fever Is Prevalent.—A total of 12,816 cases of scarlet fever have been reported during the period January 1, 1929 to November 16, 1929. This is more than twice as many cases as were reported during the entire year of 1928. The relatively low number of deaths indicates that the disease, in general, is not of a severe type. There were fifty-four scarlet fever deaths in 1928, and during the first seven months of 1929 there were seventy-four such deaths. The most

alarming feature of scarlet fever lies in the complications that may occur and which may be productive of terrific damage in later years. The ears and kidneys are commonly involved and many cases of deafness and of kidney diseases have their beginnings in scarlet fever which was contracted during childhood. Most cases of scarlet fever occur in children who are under ten years of age, but a considerable number of cases are in those who are between the ages of ten and fifteen years. All persons are not susceptible to the infection. About half of all persons who are exposed to it contract the disease.

It is essential that all cases of scarlet fever be discovered early and placed in strict isolation, giving particular heed to the destruction of all discharges from the nose, throat, and ears. Scarlet fever is spread by the transference of the infection in the discharges from the noses and throats of persons who may be ill with the disease and those who may be carriers of the infection. In order to contract scarlet fever the susceptible individual must be within "striking distance" of the person who transmits the disease. The spray and droplets from the infected person may be ejected for a distance of several feet. At the present time, scarlet fever is the most prevalent of the respiratory infections.

Crippled Child Act Helps Many.—The so-called Crippled Children's Act has now been in effect for two years and during that period a total of one hundred and forty-three certificates, enabling physically handicapped children to receive treatment free of charge, have been issued. Three of these certificates were issued in 1927, sixty-eight in 1928, and seventy-two have been issued so far this year. The one hundred and forty-three children for whom these certificates were issued live in thirty-seven counties of the state. The services of twenty-six surgeons have been utilized in the correction of their physical handicaps and the patients have been placed in twenty-four different hospitals scattered throughout the state. About half of these children are no longer in hospitals, but are still under observation of doctors and nurses. The following table gives full information concerning the results obtained through the operation of the Crippled Children's Act during the two years it has been in operation:

Number of certificates issued	143
Cases dismissed as cured	9
Cases no longer hospitalized, but still under observation	70
Cases in convalescent homes	3
Cases pending	16
Cases which have not been hospitalized	12
Cases hospitalized	33
Number of surgeons	26
Number of hospitals	24
Number of counties	37

Prevention of Blindness in Babies.—During the past two years the State Department of Public Health has distributed 26,406 outfits for the prevention of blindness in babies. These outfits consist of two wax ampoules, each of which contains two drops of a two per cent solution of nitrate of silver. The eyes of newly born babies are peculiarly liable to infection and the nitrate of silver is placed in the eyes of the infant at birth, in order to prevent the development of infections which might result in blindness. The state law requires the State Department of Public Health to distribute this product gratuitously. Many of the outfits are for use in charity institutions and in families where this method of prevention would not otherwise be available. The policy involved in this procedure saves the state vast sums of money that might otherwise be required in the care of blind persons in state institutions. The cost of the nitrate of silver is negligible. The prevention of blindness in babies has well been cited as an instance in which "the protection of the citizen from the assaults of ignorance, indifference, or neglect, when they threaten his well-being and even his economic efficiency, is a duty which the state cannot evade and which he has a right to exact."